

Regional News

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BY MONITOR TEAM

Sheema District is witnessing a historic shift as women increasingly step into the top political and administrative roles, reshaping how the district is governed.

Since its creation in 2010, Sheema had largely been led by men and often marred by internal wrangles that residents say hampered service delivery. But the just-concluded general election cycle brought a wave of female leaders, who now occupy most of the district's influential positions, from security and finance to education and municipal administration.

The Resident District Commissioner (RDC), District Police Commander (DPC), district chairperson, Sheema Municipality Town Clerk, chief finance officer, procurement officer, and heads of several institutions are all now women, a shift that local leaders say reflects both competence and growing public trust.

According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (Ubs) 2024 National Population and Housing Census, Sheema has a population of 252,272 people, with women forming the majority at 139,229 compared to 113,043 men—a demographic reality some say mirrors the district's leadership trend.

At the political level, Ms Jemimah Buhanda was re-elected unopposed as district chairperson and is set to serve her second term. She says the growing trust in women leaders is rooted in integrity and commitment.

"I am proud that we are Sheema girls. We have not disappointed the community in the tasks and responsibilities

Women set the tone in Sheema leadership shift



Lukia Nakarisa, Deputy Mayor for Sheema Municipality



Jemimah Buhanda, district chairperson



Annet Natukunda, Deputy Town Clerk for Sheema Municipality

given to us. Women are proving they are responsible, and our male counterparts now respect us," she said.

Buhanda added that the rise of women in leadership has helped curb discrimination and foster stronger teamwork across gender lines.

Joining her is Ms Lukia Nakaleesa, who won the Sheema Municipality mayoral race after defeating several male contenders. She attributes the success of women leaders to years of empowerment policies.

"When you are disadvantaged and finally get an opportunity, you run with it. That is what has happened to women," Ms Nakaleesa said, noting that public trust and dedication to service have propelled women into top offices.

POSTS HELD BY WOMEN

- Resident District Commissioner
- District Police Commander
- District Chairperson
- Municipality Town Clerk
- Chief Finance Officer
- Procurement Officer
- Heads of multiple technical and administrative departments
- Political Leaders**
 - Jemimah Buhanda – district chairperson
 - Lukia Nakaleesa – Sheema Municipality Mayor

Beyond politics, women also dominate key technical and administrative roles. Offices including the District Health Officer, Community Development Officer, Education Officer, and Town Clerk are now headed by women, reflecting what local leaders describe as merit-based appointments strengthened by confidence born of empowerment initiatives.

Ms Annet Natukunda, the Deputy Town Clerk of Sheema Municipality, said empowerment programmes have equipped women with the confidence to compete fairly.

"When they advertised for this position, we were 328 applicants, both men and women, and I emerged the best. Emancipation has made us confident

that we are competitive in every responsibility," she said.

Mr Sam Orikunda, the Deputy RDC, praised the commitment of female leaders.

"Women are flexible to work with. They are very committed and want things done in the right way. Even when they make mistakes, they are open and willing to correct them," he said.

He noted that the district has even earned the nickname "Sheema Girls" because of the number of women in leadership—a title that, while initially surprising to some, has come to symbolise the district's transformation.

While celebrating the gains, some leaders say attention should now turn to empowering the boy-child.

Ms Nakaleesa observed that, whereas women's emancipation has borne fruit, deliberate efforts are needed to ensure boys are not left behind in education and leadership development.

Community members, including school administrators, have also praised women leaders for being trustworthy, hardworking, and approachable—traits they say have improved institutional performance and public confidence.

As Sheema charts its development path, residents say the increasing presence of women in leadership signals not only progress in gender equality but also a renewed focus on accountability and service delivery. For many in the district, the rise of women leaders is no longer an exception—it is the new normal.

Compiled by Felix Ainebyoona, Rajab Mukombozi, Cosline Nakahlira, and Deo Okodi